

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1    1. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech  
3    converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:  
4       receiving at least one image from the sender;  
5       associating each at least one image with a tag;  
6       presenting the sender with options to insert the tag associated with one of the at  
7    least one image into the sender text; and  
8       after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the at least one images into  
9    the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the at least one image presented  
10   as background to the animated entity according to a position of the tag associated with  
11   the at least one image in the sender text.

1    2. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 1, wherein delivering the multi-media message further comprises  
3       presenting the at least one image as background when a word prior to the position of the  
4       tag associated with the at least one image is presented by the animated entity.  
1    3. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a static image.

1    4. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a video.

1    5. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech  
3    converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:  
4       storing a group of predefined images;  
5       associating each predefined image with a tag;

6           presenting the sender with options to insert a tag associated with one of the  
7   group of predefined images into the sender text; and  
8           after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the group of predefined  
9   images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the image associated  
10   with the inserted tag presented as background to the animated entity according to a  
11   position of the tag within the sender text.

1   6.       The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2   recipient of claim 5, further comprising:

3           receiving at least one sender-created image;  
4           associating each at least one sender-created image with a sender-image tag;  
5           presenting the sender with an option to insert a sender-image tag associated with  
6   one of the at least one sender-created images into the sender text; and

7           after the sender inserts the sender-image tag associated with one of the at least  
8   one sender-created images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with  
9   the sender-created image associated with the inserted sender-image tag presented as  
10   background to the animated entity according to a position of the sender-image tag within  
11   the sender text.

1   7.       A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech  
3   converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored predefined images  
4   having associated image tags and stored sender-created images having associated sender-  
5   created tags, the method comprising:

6           presenting the sender with options to insert image tags and sender-created tags  
7   into the sender text; and

8           after the sender inserts the image tag or sender-created tags, delivering the multi-  
9   media message with the predefined images or sender-created images associated with the

10 inserted image tags and/or sender-created tags presented as background to the animated  
11 entity according to a position of the respective tag within the sender text.

1 8. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2 recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images or sender-created images are  
3 displayed as background to the animated entity as soon as a predetermined number of  
4 words prior to the position of the respective tag within the sender text begins to be  
5 delivered.

1 9. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2 recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images are either static images or video  
3 images.

1 10. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2 recipient of claim 9, wherein the sender-created images are either static images or video  
3 images.

1 11. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2 recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech  
3 converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored images having  
4 associated image tags, the method comprising:

5 presenting the sender with options to insert image tags into the sender text;

6 presenting the sender with options to position the animated entity in any location  
7 on a display screen using animated entity position tags; and

8 after the sender inserts the image tags and animated entity position tags,

9 delivering the multi-media message with the images associated with the inserted image  
10 tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the  
11 respective tag within the sender text and wherein the position of the animated entity  
12 during the delivery of the multi-media message is associated with the animated entity  
13 position tags.

1    12.    The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 11, wherein the stored images are static and/or video images.

1    13.    The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

3                presenting the sender with an option to remove the animated entity from the  
4    display screen using an animated entity remove tag; and  
5                if the sender inserts the animated entity remove tag, delivering the multi-media  
6    message with the images associated with the inserted image tags presented as background  
7    while removing the animated entity according to a position of the animated entity  
8    remove tag within the sender text.

1    14.    A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech  
3    converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored video segments  
4    having associated video tags, the method comprising:

5                presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the  
6    sender text; and  
7                if the sender inserts one or more video segment tags in the sender text,  
8    delivering the multi-media message with the video segments associated with the inserted  
9    video tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the  
10   respective video tag within the sender text.

1    15.    The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a  
2    recipient of claim 14, wherein the stored video segments are non-sender-created and  
3    optionally sender-created, each having their associated video tags, and wherein presenting  
4    the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the sender text further  
5    comprises presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags  
6    associated with non-sender-created video segments and, if stored, presenting the sender

7 with options to insert video segments tags associated with sender-created video  
8 segments.

1 16. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the  
2 multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,  
3 the method comprising:

4 providing the sender with a group of customizable multi-media message  
5 templates, each template of the groups of templates including predefined parameters  
6 comprising a predefined text message, a predefined animated entity, a predefined  
7 background, predefined background music, and a predefined set of emoticons within the  
8 text of the message; and

9 if the sender chooses a customizable multi-media message template, presenting  
10 the sender with options to change any of the predefined parameters.

1 17. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 16, wherein once the sender customizes the multi-media message template, if at all,  
3 the method further comprises delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1 18. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined  
3 parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to add the name of the  
4 recipient to the multi-media message.

1 19. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined  
3 parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose from a list of  
4 predefined and/or sender-added options for each of the template parameters for  
5 customizing the multi-media message.

1 20. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined

3 parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose at least one  
4 position from which the animated entity will deliver the message.

1 21. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 20, wherein presenting the user with an option to choose at least one position from  
3 which the animated entity will deliver the message further comprises presenting the user  
4 with an option to control animated entity entrance and departure features.

1 22. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 16, further comprising presenting the user with an option to modify a camera  
3 position using camera control tags within the text.

1 23. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the  
2 multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,  
3 the method comprising:

4 providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of  
5 animated entities;

6 once the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver the message, presenting the  
7 sender with options to add accessories to the animated entity; and

8 once the sender chooses accessories to add to the animated entity, if any,  
9 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1 24. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated  
3 entity further comprises presenting the sender with options to add accessories  
4 comprising glasses, ear rings, hats, shirts, hair color, hair style, and facial hair.

1 25. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2 claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated  
3 entity further comprises presenting the sender with a list of accessories, the list of

4       accessories including accessories provided by a multi-media message service provider and  
5       accessories added by the sender.

1       26.      The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of  
2       claim 23, wherein upon the sender choosing accessory options, presenting the sender  
3       with a preview of the animated entity with the chosen accessory options.

1       27.      A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the  
2       multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,  
3       the method comprising:

4                 providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of  
5       animated entities;

6                 providing the sender with options to insert emoticons in the text of the message;

7                 providing the sender with options to modify an amplitude of emoticons inserted  
8       in the text of the message;

9                 once the sender chooses emoticons to add to the animated entity, if any,  
10      delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1       28.      The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 27, further comprising:  
2                 if the sender modifies the amplitude of emoticons inserted in the text, changing  
3       the appearance of the modified emoticons in the text of the message to reflect the  
4       change in amplitude for each modified inserted emoticon.

1       29.      The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 28, wherein the  
2       appearance of the modified emoticons comprises changing the modified emoticon from  
3       a black on white background to black on colored background.

1       30.      The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 29, wherein the  
2       appearance of the modified emoticons relates to an intensity of the modified amplitude.